

Company Dedicated to Replacing Carbon Black Helps Others in the Bioeconomy Tap Federal Market



HEMP BLACK

For over 150 years, crude oil has been burned to create 'carbon black,' the black pigment used in virtually everything from tires to shoes, fabrics to cosmetics, from inks to personal electronics. To develop an alternative to burning oil, Hemp Black™ and its parent company Ecofibre, utilize industrial hemp that sequesters carbon 10x more efficiently than forests.

The company's Hemp Black / eco6 product is a patented direct replacement for petroleum-based carbon black. According to the Hemp Black team, the carbon footprint of billions of products could be reduced by simply replacing petroleum-based carbon black with eco6. Even better, eco6 is USDA Certified Biobased.

During the process to become certified, Tailor Gable, Hemp Black's Lead Project Manager for Sustainability, became a resident expert not only on the certification process but also on the opportunities associated with the BioPreferred® Program—including

how to tap the federal market. With her expertise, she often mentored other businesses on how to familiarize themselves with the Program's Catalog, get certified, grow sales within the federal government, and partner with businesses certified by the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC).

"The BioPreferred Program's certification label is instant credibility and validity that specific product claims are real and verified at a lab," she explained. "When that product falls under an 'FP' [Federal Purchasing Preference] designation, is competitively priced and paired

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Tailor Gable, Hemp Black’s Lead Project Manager for Sustainability

with a minority-owned business or supplier, that’s a strong combination in terms of being able to win federal contracts.”

USDA has identified 139 categories (e.g., cleaners, carpet, lubricants, paints) of biobased products for which agencies and their contractors have mandatory purchasing requirements. Biobased product purchasing requirements are included in solicitations, blanket purchase agreements, contracts and specifications. Requirements also extend to purchases made through purchase cards, electronic catalogs, and other procurement vehicles.

“Doing business with the federal government is a complicated process. It requires having someone who really knows what they’re doing. But there are tons of resources available,” she said. One of which is the BioPreferred Program Catalog, along with the training materials posted on the Biopreferred.gov website. Ms. Gable advises businesses to dedicate one person or a team to focus on pursuing federal (or

state) procurement opportunities.

“As long as you have a team of people working together, you can solidify a good plan and be sure your i’s are dotted and your t’s are crossed. If the proposal is for plastic pallets, but it doesn’t specify wood or bioplastics, there’s always a way to find more information by contacting the Contracting Specialist named on the solicitation,” she said.

But the first step is getting registered with the BioPreferred Program Catalog or becoming USDA Certified Biobased.

“Once you are included in the Catalog, you have a huge stepping-stone to both private and public sector opportunities,” she stressed. As more biobased businesses succeed at tapping the federal market with more agencies buying biobased products, the more petroleum-based products can be replaced, and our circular bioeconomy can thrive.

